

Occasionally the Family would have a train trip to Katoomba or Wentworth Falls, with a walk to the lookouts. Other times it could be a train trip to Sydney for a ferry ride to Manly or some special occasion like the Easter Show or the visit of a member of the Royal Family.

Then there were the train trips to Taree and the service car drive to Wang Wauk, which were generally an annual occurrence, to stay for a week or two on the dairy farm, where Mother grew up with our Grandmother, Uncle Stuart and Aunt Meg. When we travelled up at night the train sounds were magnified and at each stop the stationmaster would call out the place name, - the mere mention of places like Dungog and Carrick Flat brings the memory of the old box carriages and the sounds of steam locomotives.

These holidays were undoubtedly the highlight of our existence – cows, horses, dogs, many different birds and a lively countryside to wander in and explore.

Mum and Dad used to fish for perch – lovely to eat – in the creek that ran through the farm. I remember being taken with them one afternoon at the age of four years or so and being told to sit quietly on the log and not to move. After a while I managed to fall in! Naturally I had to be carried to the house and I was reminded quite a few times later, that I complained that they had not stopped me from falling in!

The old farm house was built of vertical slabs, with an iron roof. The walls were lined with layer on layer of newspapers, fixed with flour paste. The ceilings were made of unbleached calico. The big kitchen had a wide open fireplace, with the wood burning stove on one side and an open area for a log fire, all very practical and very snug and comfortable.

The house was well away from the creek and Grandfather had dug a well near the house for reserve water in a dry spell. The well had been filled in and it held about a foot of water one year. Mum warned Eric and I to keep away from the old well as a crocodile lived in it. It did not take Eric and yours truly long to find a couple of long sticks and with due caution we tried to stir it up, but it must have been hibernating or something. It was a wonderful place to visit and still is. We miss Grandma, who died in the 1940's and Uncle Stuart passed away three or four years ago aged 95. His widow, Aunt Ivy, was quite a few years younger than Uncle and she still resides there and her youngest daughter. Helen runs the dairy very efficiently. The family welcome is still the same.

Getting back to our Glenbrook days. Eric was two years younger and Gordon five years younger than yours truly. I was more the cautious, careful type. Eric was full of go and we had a good yard to play in and room to ramble in the bush area across the road. When Gordon was born Eric and I both had whooping cough and we only caught sight of the newcomer from quite a distance for a few weeks. Probably it was just as well, as the cure-all for our ailments was washed garlic in our shoes.

Eric was daring, a natural climber and had a couple of bad falls, but other than bruising did not come to any harm. Gordon did not figure much in our childhood activities – maybe it was just as well, as he turned out a thoughtful, practical individual and we had lots of fun together as we grew older.

Betty was born in 1927. That was the year I joined the scouts and met William Ernest Foster, that is another story.

Mr. Wurth had been our school teacher at Glenbrook and he was put in charge of the new Public School at Blaxland in October 1926. It was obvious that the enrolment of the new school would be low, so Mr. Wurth asked the parents' of the pupils at Glenbrook who would be in 6th Class in 1927 to send them to Blaxland for that year instead of changing teachers at such an important time.

The Glenbrook community had a great respect for Mr. Wurth as an individual and a teacher – so a dozen or so youngsters used to catch the train to and from Blaxland or ride bicycles to school at Blaxland on the completed section of the Western Highway. The days of Blaxland Public School were much the same as we had at Glenbrook. Mr. Wurth had a way with children, was a good teacher, obtaining good behaviour and cheerful obedience without bluster or severity. The boys were encouraged and taught how, to play cricket regularly. From memory the "sport" for the girls was needlework taught by Mrs. Wurth or her daughter Peggy. One outstanding event was a visit to the school by a Mr. Jim Carlton, a very pleasant man who had represented Australia as a sprinter in the Olympic Games.

(continued overleaf)